



## Restorative Practices Knowledge Exchange Report

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# Restorative Practices Knowledge Exchange

**02–04 April, 2019**  
**Ulster University**

# Who we are

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## Thanks

**To the organisations and individuals that participated, including:**

Community Restorative Justice Ireland; NI Alternatives; Restorative Gloucestershire, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire; Police Service of Northern Ireland; Gloucestershire Police; NI Prison Service; Probation Board NI; Probation Service Ireland; DOJ NI; Victim Support NI; Quaker Service NI; Restorative Practices Forum NI; Family Group Conference (NI); Home Group; Ulster University; University of Gloucestershire; Maynooth University; University of Sierra Leone; all the other individuals and organisations that participated in the public forum event.

**For providing funding for the event:**

INCORE and the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences, Ulster University. Environmental Dynamics and Governance and the School of Natural and Social Sciences, University of Gloucestershire .

# The purpose of the Knowledge Exchange

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**Opportunity** to learn from other RJ practitioners and services

**Chance** to discuss key issues

**Space** to make contacts – exchange details with people!

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The Restorative Practices Knowledge Exchange was held at Ulster University, Belfast Campus, from 2nd to 4th April, 2019. The event brought together restorative practitioners, associated organisations and academics from different countries to share knowledge and experiences on building restorative services and the challenges and opportunities faced in developing restorative practices in the future. The three day event considered a range of issues, including: the future of adult Restorative Services; restorative practice for young people; the role of communities in restorative practice; the breadth of situations where restorative practices can have a positive impact; and the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)8 concerning restorative justice in criminal matters. The event comprised a series of group and panel discussions on these topics informed by a short, anonymous questionnaire designed to highlight the issues most pertinent to those working in this area.

**Slides** from across the three days event are available [here](#).

# The Event Schedule

Day 1: 02 April, 2019	
11.00-11.30	Registration / tea & coffee
11.30-12.15	Introduction, Meet and Greet
12.15-14.00	Presentations and discussion with organisations
14.00-15.00	Learning lunch
15.00	Close
Day 2: 03 April, 2019	
9.00-9.30	Registration / tea & coffee
9.30-10.00	Introduction to day 2
10.00-10.45	Restorative Approaches survey results and responses
10.45-12.30	<b>Workshop:</b> Police-led and Community-led models of Restorative Services
12.30-13.15	Lunch
13.15-14.30	<b>Challenges &amp; opportunities 1:</b> Council of Europe recommendations (Ian Marder, Maynooth University); Adult RJ Strategy (Louise Cooper, DoJ NI)
14.30-14.45	Tea & coffee
14.45-16.45	<b>Challenges &amp; opportunities 2:</b> Education, Youth Justice and Young People; Prisons & Housing; Communities & Multi Agency Working; Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse.
16.45-17.00	Summary of the day
Day 3: 04 April, 2019	
Morning	Restorative Gloucestershire staff tour of Belfast
Afternoon	Restorative Gloucestershire staff visit to Northern Ireland Alternatives office
18.00-20.00	Public Event: Summary of the Knowledge exchange and Panel Discussion on key issues across the three days
20.00	Drinks reception and networking space



# Day 1: 02 April, 2019

The first day of the knowledge exchange provided the different practitioners with the opportunity to meet with each other, introduce their respective projects and discuss the issues of importance they face in providing restorative services. It set the tone for the three days, introducing key themes for discussion across the event.



## Day 1 schedule

11.00-11.30	Registration / tea & coffee
11.30-12.15	Introduction, Meet and Greet
12.15-14.00	Presentations and discussion with organisations
14.00-15.00	Learning lunch
15.00	Close

## Presentations and discussion with participating organisations

### Restorative Gloucestershire

A hub model with a central body committed to promoting the use of Restorative Practices through facilitation, advice and by supporting others to use and develop restorative skills. Funded by the Office of the Police and Crime commissioner for Gloucestershire, Restorative Gloucestershire is a group of statutory, non statutory and voluntary sector partners that have joined with the aim of offering all people who come into contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) or who come into conflict in the community an opportunity to participate in a restorative intervention. Find out more [here](#).

### Practitioners and advocates from Belfast and Beyond:

Introductions were made from a range of different agencies across Northern Ireland, including David Eagleson (NI Prison Service); Roisin Leckey (Probation Board NI); Geraldine Hanna (Victim Support NI); Janette McKnight (Quaker Service NI – more information on their work can be found [here](#)), and Tom Winston (NI Alternatives - find out more [here](#)) who spoke about community-based approaches to restorative justice. Tom is Director of Northern Ireland Alternatives, a government accredited restorative justice programme that aims to promote and develop non-violent community responses to the issues of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour in areas across Northern Ireland. They currently have branches in North Belfast, Greater Shankill, East Belfast, South Belfast and North Down.

### Facing the post-crises municipal challenge in Kenema, Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone suffered a devastating civil war between 1991 and 2002 and an Ebola virus disease outbreak in 2014/15. During the war many people, many of them young, fled the conflict by heading to the city for protection. As a result, Sierra Leone is experiencing a post-conflict and post-epidemic economic and demographic recovery. This work describes a youth-intervention designed to divert young people from problematic behaviours and activities. See the presentation [here](#).



# Key themes discussed on day 1

## **Community-Led (bottom-up) vs Police-led (top-down) services?**

The restorative agencies and practitioners present spoke about their origins and the different models and practices they used. General consensus was that England & Wales have a top down (police led) approach to RJ, while Northern Ireland has both a bottom up (community led) approach and a top down (Youth Justice) approach. This reflected the different contexts of each jurisdiction: in NI community-based restorative justice grew as a response to paramilitary punishment violence and was at least partly a product of poor relationships between communities and statutory agencies, particularly the police, and enhanced community capacity as a direct result of the conflict. In Gloucestershire, restorative justice developed with support from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

## **The Sierra Leone project – what makes something Restorative?**

The delegates present noted that this was a very interesting project, but discussed if this work could be described as Restorative justice or is it more a youth diversionary approach? A debate ensued around the restorative elements within this body of work including aspects such as empowerment and transformation vs the importance of a restorative philosophy. Discussions centred on how to build links with projects with similar elements of post-conflict reconstruction, as well as sharing learning on the issues that countries transitioning out of conflict can expect to encounter and the support available.

## **Domestic violence and Sexual violence – should we use Restorative Justice/Approaches for these crimes?**

Domestic violence emerged as an area for discussion. The NI practitioners stated that RJ processes are not currently in place for domestic violence offences. Restorative Gloucestershire reported that they do deal with elements of DV cases, but there is a limited amount of work. Such responses generally take the form of post sentence work in Gloucestershire, as they don't tend to engage in pre-sentence DV work due to the complexity of such cases.

# Day 2: 03 April, 2019

Day 2 of the Knowledge Exchange focused on a series of workshops and discussion areas for Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice, with the issues generated from the pre-conference survey and the material cover in Day 1. During the Day 2 sessions, the practitioners considered a range of issues including the different approaches between jurisdictions and areas of provision, and some of the key challenges and opportunities they faced. Each of the sessions was introduced by a keynote speaker or speakers, who gave context to the discussion and posed important questions for the group to consider. The following pages are a summary of the discussions.



## Day 2 schedule

9.00-9.30	Registration / tea & coffee
9.30-10.00	Introduction to day 2
10.00-10.45	Restorative Approaches survey results and responses
10.45-12.30	<b>Workshop:</b> Police-led and Community-led models of Restorative Services
12.30-13.15	Lunch
13.15-14.30	<b>Challenges &amp; opportunities 1:</b> Council of Europe recommendations (Ian Marder, Maynooth University); Adult RJ Strategy (Louise Cooper, DoJ NI)
14.30-14.45	Tea & coffee
14.45-16.45	<b>Challenges &amp; opportunities 2:</b> Education, Youth Justice and Young People; Prisons & Housing; Communities & Multi Agency Working; Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse.
16.45-17.00	Summary of the day

# Restorative approaches: Survey results and responses

28 responses

Gloucestershire ; Belfast ; across NI ; Sierra Leone

## The Survey:

The practitioner's survey was open to those attending the knowledge exchange or from agencies represented at the event. The survey will remain open for a time for those who wish to add responses. Questions were in two groups. The first explored the range of services provided. Respondents were asked to provide short answers or tick the relevant box:

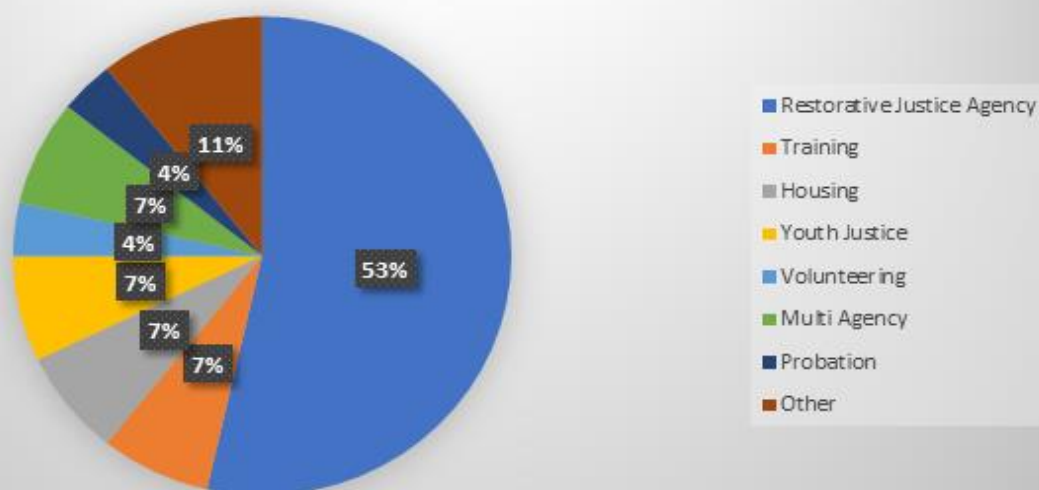
*Where is your restorative organisation/project based?; How would you describe your restorative organisation/project and the work that you do (for example, probation, youth work, restorative justice agency) ; What type(s) of restorative process(es) do you most commonly use; Do you feel that your organisation/project is taken seriously as a valid response to crime or conflict?*

The second portion were questions eliciting longer answers and were used to explore areas that were most rewarding or challenging in the practitioner's RJ work, including:

*What do you feel are the benefits and/or impacts of the restorative practices or services you provide?; What are the biggest challenges you face when attempting to improve the restorative practices or services you provide?; What are the biggest opportunities you see for developing your restorative practices or services going forward?*

The following pages provide a brief summary of these findings along with a summary of the discussions that were had on this portion of the event.

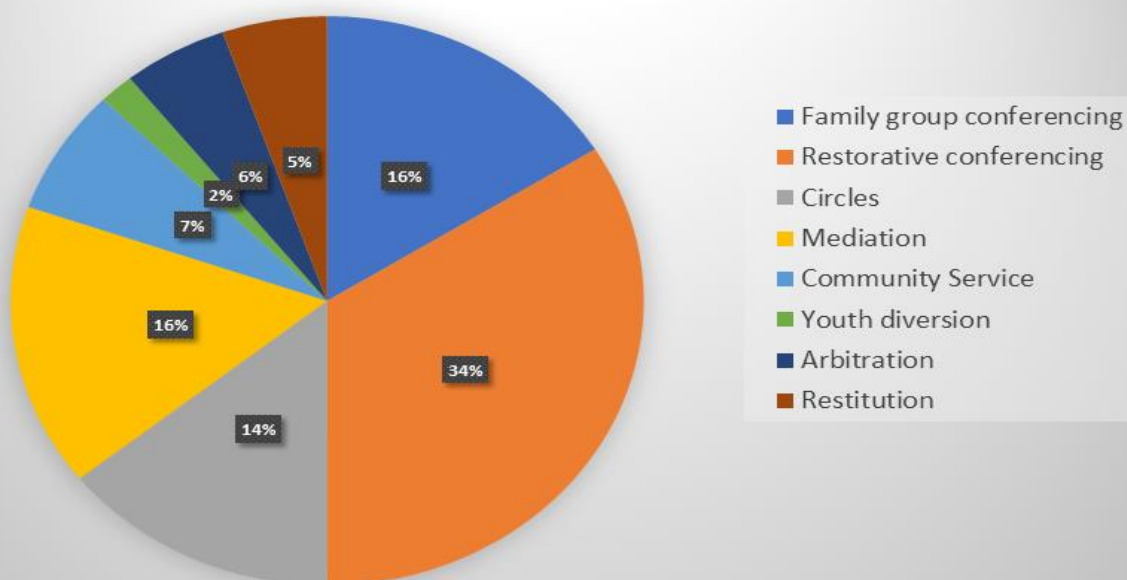
## How would you describe your restorative organisation/project and the work that you do?



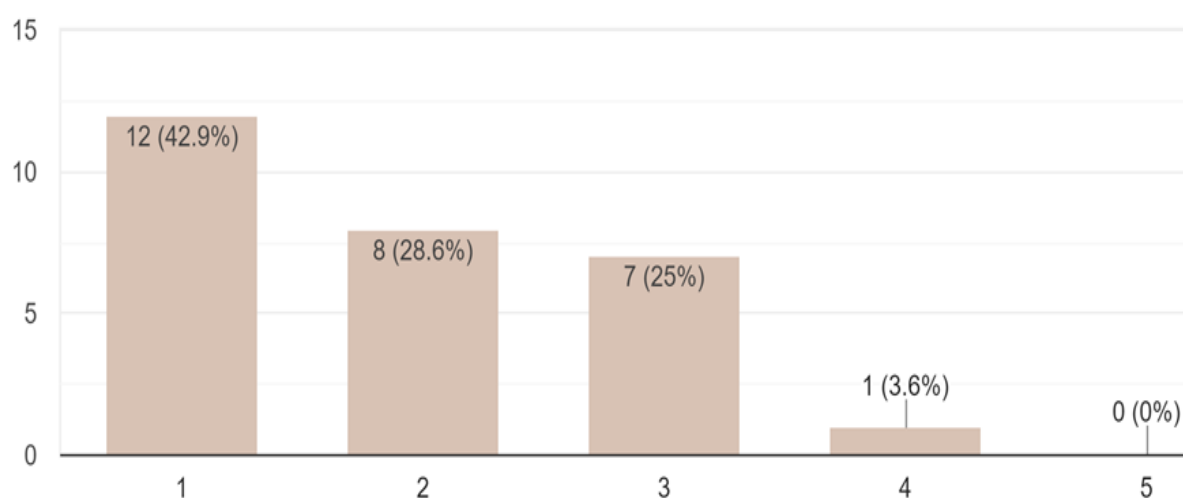
The practitioners and agencies present agreed that the survey findings reflected many of the most common issues that they faced in their work. In particular, they agreed that whilst more organisations are taking restorative approaches seriously, there is still a long way to go before it finds full acceptance as an approach to justice.

Despite these challenges, the practitioners and agencies in the room expressed a continued belief in restorative approaches as a method of providing better support to victims of crime, offenders and strengthening local communities and felt that its use would continue to grow.

## What type(s) of restorative process(es) do you most commonly use?



## Do you feel that your organisation/project is taken seriously as a valid response to crime or conflict?



Very few or no agencies/organisations we work with view our service as a valid response to crime or conflict



Every agency or organisation we work with views our service as a valid response to crime or conflict

The practitioners present reflected on the idea that whilst RJ is not always taken seriously by organisations as a whole and in policy, it is often championed by interested individuals within those organisations. As well as this, there are also varying levels of interest from communities, with the practitioners from England noting that they struggle in particular with engaging communities in the principles of RJ. The practitioner from CRJI made the point that the concept of RJ is prevalent all throughout life in many contexts - to help its success RJ therefore needs demystifying as such practice happens all the time without many of us necessarily thinking about it.

Respondents reflected on the difference between the models of RJ across both jurisdictions. Gloucestershire (and perhaps England more broadly) tend to struggle with promoting community buy-in to RJ, whilst some of the Northern Ireland projects outside of the Youth Justice Agency are missing adequate top-down resources. One way to solve this is to show real people compelling stories of successful experiences to inspire others to get involved in restorative work and bring about the change in culture that many practitioners said was needed to embed RJ into organisations and communities.



# Qualitative answers from the survey

## What do you feel are the benefits / impacts of the restorative practices / services you provide?

- Empowering individuals and families to find their strengths
- More connected and healthier communities
- Improving victim engagement and experiences to provide closure / reduce fear
- Mending relationships
- Providing community responses to community problems
- Space for communication / Allowing people to express their feelings
- Promoting emotional responses such as empathy
- Showing a different way
- Repairing harm and reintegrating offenders

## What are the biggest challenges you face when attempting to improve the services you provide?

- Perceptions that RJ is a soft option / not a valid process for justice
- Popularity of punitive / violent responses to harm / wrongdoing
- Reluctance by some organisations to take risks / challenge existing practices
- Difficulty getting all colleagues to accept RP / share responsibility
- Insufficient or insecure funding / resourcing
- Difficulty selling RP when separate victim and offender not always there
- Fear that taking on controversial cases may jeopardise funding
- Finding the time to do RP or obtaining suitable venues
- Recruiting volunteers / building experience and confidence / accessing training

## What are the biggest opportunities for developing your practices or services going forward?

- Community self-referral / raising awareness for addressing issues through RP
- Training young people and organisations to utilise RP Skills
- Building RP in schools as a 'whole child' pastoral approach rather than a limited focus on academic achievement or behaviour
- Widening the stakeholder group / Government departments involved
- Gaining experience / Growing capacity / sharing positive restorative outcomes
- Re-imagining criminal justice and harm / Giving voice to victims
- Using RP in prisons to address offending behaviour / give people the opportunity to change
- Embedding RJ as standard element of probation practice across the service



# Workshop: Police-led and Community-led models of Restorative Services

## Table 1: Police-led (or top-down)

What is it?

What are the challenges?

What do we need to make  
this work?

## Table 2: Community-led (or bottom-up)

What is it?

What are the challenges?

What do we need to make  
this work?



Following is a summary of the key issues identified during the group discussions on issues around top-down and bottom-up models of Restorative Justice. We have worked to capture the broad range of perspectives of those involved, the responses on the following pages are indicative of these responses and not attributable to any one individual.

# Community-led and Bottom-up

## What is it?

- Difficult for communities to understand
- Is it about reparation? Community Service? Neighbourhood work? Prevention?
- From primary school to pensioners and everything in-between
- Less alien now but still misunderstood
- The important context of schools:
  - Primary and secondary - How they are funded – e.g. academy
  - Investment in Restorative practices (Authorities) Internal buy in by schools
  - Students – seeking their feedback – allocating responsibility – learning differently – behavioural plans
  - Parents – isolated, undermined, unsure how to support their child, fearful of the power of schools
  - Compatibility with traditional Education rules and regulations
  - Exclusions and Expulsions – RP for positive sanctions

## What are the Challenges?

- Explaining Restorative Practices (through use of restorative language)
- Different meanings for different people (learn to interpret what they say)
- Funding - often comes with a focus on statistics, hard to measure wider impact – RPs often do not have an end timeframe – when does support end?
- Maintaining staff levels and attracting volunteers
- Barriers between community organisations and statutory agencies.
- Overcoming community conflicts – armed groups – risk and opportunity
- How to do preventative work with young people?

## What do we need to do to make this work?

- Magistrates / CPS to understand
- Mainstreaming funding
- Time for people to know that we are there and build trust
- Break down barriers and the us versus them attitude
- Government / statutory agencies need to trust communities / share information
- Allow those with the purse strings to observe conferences
- Universities to work in partnership and help to find out what works

## What is it?

- Generally top-down models of restorative justice involve:
  - pressure to be seen to be doing something, for example from the Children First panel, from community demand, or shaped by the legal requirements;
  - the need for Police to be involved but not leading the process;
  - community views on how it might look - with the potential for officers to be trained by community groups in restorative practices.
- For the PSNI, the models used are shaped by:
  - community pressure to do RJ;
  - issues with getting officers to do/refer RJ;
  - perspectives on it being a 'soft option';
  - the need to empower communities to do this themselves.
- In Gloucestershire the model involves:
  - Level 1: volume crime dealt with by officers;
  - Level 2: Community relationship building (dealt with by Restorative Gloucestershire);
  - Multi-agency panels for under 18s

## What are the Challenges?

- Practical problems include issues such as:
  - getting the right people in place both within the police and within communities;
  - that the community do not always want a voice, they want the police to just fix it;
  - Police visibility not always being welcome in communities;
  - difficulties using RJ for habitual offenders such as some drug addicts & shop lifters;
  - offenders having to admit their guilt to access RJ solutions;
  - the process is not always voluntary;
  - there is insufficient support to navigate legal system;
  - Time taken to conduct restorative justice appropriately – linked to resources;
- Organisational problems include issue such as:
  - Police being spread too thinly, at times trying to be all things to everybody;
  - the Police role merging into the remit of other agencies;
  - Police officers in England and Wales using RJ as a means for decreasing bureaucracy;
  - insufficient resources to achieve many of the desired goals;
  - Assumption that police/agencies know what the public wants

## What do we need to do to make this work?

- Some argued for community to be the dominant voice in the conversations, the Police need to empower communities and transfer ownership and responsibility for this to happen.
- Using PACE powers of arrest less encourages police to look for alternatives
- There is a need to break the cycle for more serious offenders.
- We need to find ways to speak more effectively to young people.
- Provide more resources / funding to carry out interventions
- NI 2007 Protocols need reviewing
- Showcase work and prove success / engage victims / give offenders and informed choice
- Has to be tailored to needs – there is no off the shelf model

# Challenges & Opportunities 1

Exploring the Future: the opportunity to introduce a Centre of Restorative Excellence in Northern Ireland

Dr Ian Marder,  
Maynooth University  
***Council of Europe  
Recommendation***

Louise Cooper,  
Department of Justice  
***Adult RJ Strategy***



1. What would success look like if this function was operating well?
2. What would be the first step in making this happen (success factors needed)?
3. What strengths are in place to build on?
4. What barriers need to be overcome (and suggested approaches to overcome same)?
5. Is there anything missing (function/what needs to be done)?

## Summary of discussions on the Council of Europe Recommendation:

- This is not legally binding for the UK (or other states).
- Aim is to enhance awareness and use of Restorative Justice in Europe.
- Provides a balanced approach, not just focusing on the victims but the offenders as well.
- RJ can be regarded as a broad concept, but regarded (defined) as stakeholder participation to repair harm.
- The need to increase use by prison and probation services.
- Should be available throughout all stages of the criminal justice system, and for all people.
- There needs to be provision to outline how states can implement this.
- Finland has a very developed system of RJ, including domestic violence. This could be a case study for others to follow.
- There should be broader RJ training, even if people aren't involved in facilitating. It just helps to raise awareness.
- Should not look just at criminality, but all conflict within society.
- Gloucestershire Youth Justice Forum seen as a good example of bringing communities together that have not previously trusted one another.



### Link to council of Europe recommendation:

[Promoting more humane and socially effective penal sanctions; Adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\) 8 concerning restorative justice in criminal matters](#)



## Introduction: Centre of Restorative Excellence

- The justice process was devolved to NI in 2010, and there are a number of different providers and agencies involved.
- There has been a shift of focus in the last few years following the 'fresh start' initiative in 2015.
- These include a commitment to tackle paramilitary activity; the exploration of an adult restorative justice process; looking to develop long term crime prevention and support transition for the future.
- Measures include a dedicated fund for RJ initiatives with the Department for Justice planning for a Centre of Restorative Excellence. A feasibility study has been commissioned for this to be implemented.
- This is not looking to replace community schemes, but will assist with their coordination and work together towards shared goals. An opportunity to make this a centre that all can learn from, that promotes partnership working, that provides accreditation and ongoing monitoring of standards is a core theme.
- There will be developing and training for staff, and public dialog and encouraging more people to become involved. it will also facilitate sustainable income generation.

## Centre of Excellence group questions:

### 1. What would success look like?

- Enough provision to cover need with equal access. Enough accredited practitioners and consistency of standards.

### 2. First step in making it happen?

- Ongoing funding commitment is essential in developing the opportunities.

### 3. Strengths to build on

- Already a wealth of experience and framework regarding accreditation and tiering system.

### 4. Barriers to overcome

- Can lead to a hierarchical system. Transferability of any awards, and what does the qualification look like. Exclusivity – needs buy in from practitioners so not regarded sceptically.

### 5. Anything missing?

- Consideration on how complaints handled and by who.



## Challenges & Opportunities 2

Discussions involving different practitioners and agencies on four of the key issues to have emerged from the event.



### Education, Youth Justice and Young People

*(introduced by Geraldine McCorry, Youth Justice Agency)*

**How can we realise the potential of restorative practices in youth justice and for young people more broadly?**

### Prisons & Housing

*(introduced by David Eagleson, NI Prison Service ; Chris Pattinson, Home Group Supported housing)*

**What strategies can be deployed in prisons, probation and housing that work?**

### Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse

*(A key theme from day 1 and added to the discussions in day 2)*

**How can we (should we?) be using Restorative approaches for DV and SV?**

### Communities & Multi Agency Working

*(Introduced Brian Payne)*

**How do we get agencies working together?**

## Education, Youth Justice and Young People (*Geraldine McCorry, Youth Justice Agency*)

- Described involvement in educating solicitors and judges at pilot scheme stage, however it is at the discretion of Magistrate's regarding referrals to RJ. They appear to have concerns about a lack of trust in the RJ process. However referrals have increased and there appears to be more trust in the process.
- RJ allows young people to take responsibility for their actions as part of the victim/offender/community triangle.
- It allows an opportunity to meet in a safe space and understand viewpoints from other people, empowering the participants to shape the future.
- Once labelled, it is hard for young people to remove the tag and it needs adults to help young people make good choices.

## Prisons (*David Eagleson, NI Prison Service*)

- Considers prison sentences to be a vital opportunity for prisoners to develop skills and mechanisms for improvement.
- PSNI delivered conferencing training to prison officers, leading to a PGCert in prison conferencing. They have a restorative landing and keep apart wings. Out of 850 prisoners, about 250 need keeping apart. It requires a lot of work to eradicate the issues in the keep apart wing. The restorative landing is an opportunity for prisoners to have a say about how the prison is run.
- Broader ambition of trying to give closure to victims and their families - using victim stories to showcase work on other practitioners and in the media is a powerful tool.

## Housing (*Chris Pattinson, Home Group Supported housing*)

- Described the use of Restorative Justice as a response to ASB in a housing association - Young people in supported accommodation have a range of issues, such as mental health, drugs and relationships that require support with.
- There is a big role in educating the staff working in supportive housing to be more restorative and less confrontational. In that regard, there needs to be work with social housing providers in terms of references for people to demonstrate that they have turned their lives around, this then makes it more likely they can arrange their own accommodation.
- There has been a drive to change from Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) to Positive Behaviour Contracts (PBCs). This supports them in avoiding previous behaviour, not just dictating to them how they should behave. This gives them more ownership of their issues.

## How can we realise the potential of restorative practices in youth justice and for young people more broadly?

### Courts

There should be a de-escalation of sanctions at an early stage (pre-conviction) to prevent criminalisation

There should be potential for a **youth restorative conference** option as a disposal at court

In Northern Ireland there is more support for diversionary sanctions than there seems to be in England & Wales

### Schools

Schools are currently taking a more punitive approach, when they **should be encouraged to be more restorative with both crime and non-crime** issues such as bullying.

There needs to be a link between the parental support measures (discussed below) and input from the schools, to ensure **joined up working**.

By getting restorative practice working effectively in schools it can have a **ripple effect into the community**, with a reduction in problems such as ASB.

There needs to be a reconsideration around school expulsions, where schools should be made to deal with a problematic pupil and **not just relocate them**. The target driven culture in schools is acting as a barrier to this.

### Social Issues

There is currently not enough focus on dealing with social problems at an early stage, with a tendency to wait until they become criminal issues.

**Earlier intervention** work is required.

Social work needs to **focus on relationships** for young people and parents. This needs to be available for all, not just those in greatest need.

There needs to be **restorative parenting** courses available throughout the life course (similar to what is available to adopting parents), with greater input from health visitors. This includes face to face parental support networks, and a coaching and mentoring program for parents.

There needs to be **greater provision of activities** for young people as a diversionary tactic away from crime.

There needs to be **better support for the foster care system**, not just relocating young people because all it does is move the problem around.

A common reflection was a need for **better coordination of agencies**.

### Housing

There needs to be **better training** for people working in supported housing to de-escalate situations, without just resorting to calling the police.

## Housing

Need to build/provide more supported housing. The design of the buildings needs to encourage communal living **rather than isolating people**.

Building Restorative Practice into the working practices is key to **changing approaches**. Staff, ASB officers and others involved need training in how to: listen to people; talk to people; coach and support people; persevere with those that are hard to reach.

Other **opportunities** include: using resident-run circles to deal with issues; using community-level social Maida to help develop awareness of other strategies/activities

Day 2, 03 April 22

## Social Care:

There is space for social workers to **become involved** in the restorative process, with preventative work before crisis point used to divert from prisons/probation.

Restorative Practices can help **challenge negative role models** in communities, particularly for young people.

## Prisons & housing:

What strategies can be deployed in prisons, probation and housing that work?

## Probation

Need to **raise the profile of Restorative Approaches**, and to encourage more referrals for RJ services from probation.

**Embed Restorative Practice** into training, not just with individuals in an organisation.

Better **liaison with the Victims Unit** would help develop Restorative Practice.

Behaviour contacts should be made together and could **include the victims** voices.

Community service needs more buy-in from those involved. **There are opportunities** to be innovative in how this is deployed

## Prison:

Each prison works differently, which needs to be taken into account. It needs **Prison Governor buy-in** to make it work.

Using prison officers to facilitate cases would help to **embed the ethos** across the service – although there would need to be control for potential bias.

Opportunities for prisoners to use Restorative Approaches with each other – they **could be RA champions** in prisons. Eastwood Park prison are exploring this opportunity.

There are difficulties in current architecture of many prisons, and in **breaking down bravado** with some groups, particularly young people.

## Challenges

DV and SV are different crimes with different levels of coercive control. This can make it difficult to judge when RJ is suitable. There are concerns over safeguarding – how do we manage victims consent in cases where there are significant level of coercive behaviour? To manage these issues it is essential to **work with experts** in the area to make sure practice is safe.

If we say RJ cant happen in DV and SV cases, **are we taking power away from the victims** to make their choice?

What are the **rights of the alleged perpetrators** in the process – for it to be a fully restorative process then it should provide opportunities for all. This is a difficult concept with DV and SV, and need to remember the key concept...

**...don't cause harm.**

## Domestic Violence (DV) and Sexual Violence (SV):

How can we (should we?) use Restorative Approaches with DV and SV?

## Opportunities

Not all cases are suitable – as with all RJ it must involve **careful casework** and facilitation. **Working with appropriate experts** in the field to make sure its safe and suitable

Its not about 'taking a risk' to work in these areas, but about **reducing the risk so** that RJ can work in these areas.

Rather than sexual violence we should consider the term **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**, which is broader and covers a wider range of issues, some of which may take less management to achieve Restorative outcomes.

In Gloucestershire, RJ is being used for such crimes, largely post-event, family conferencing. Where it has involved the offender, it has been successful but it takes a lot of very **careful planning and preparation**.

## How do we get agencies working together?

### Overcoming competitiveness

Issues were identified with **competition between organisations for limited funding** & Resources, including:

- competition between statutory agencies for primacy and resources in certain areas.
- Competition between community organisations for limited funding pots and for access to community members.
- There has also been a struggle in the past with statutory agencies feeling threatened by the rise of community groups working in what they see as their criminal justice space.

There was discussion around how this situation had been improved through encouraging organisations to apply for joint contracts and funding bids with partnership approaches built into them, with such bids were more likely to be successful.

### Bringing Agencies out of their Silos

There was a lot of discussion over ways that **statutory agency had improved** their engagement & communication with other agencies and community groups, as well as ways **they could do more**, for instance

- Becoming more open / approachable
- Conduct events and outreach / open satellite offices / drop in centres
- Search for the right people / groups with whom to construct partnerships
- Share information and resources / process of reciprocation, you give some and get some in return
- Share training skills and expertise to build capacity with potential partners
- Give smaller agencies and groups the win / the big org does not always take primacy or the credit for success.
- Use partnerships to share the load at a time of increased demand for services versus reduced resources available.
- Overcoming cynicism / embracing change and the 'sure we have always done it that way' reluctance to change practice.



# Day 3: 04 April, 2019

The final day of the Knowledge Exchange began with a series of visits around Belfast for the Restorative Gloucestershire practitioners, including a visit with NI Alternatives to explore how their community-led project was working with the local community.

The event concluded with two panel discussion on the key issues that emerged from the conference. Panels were based on two questions: **Question 1: How can we realise the potential of restorative practice in our schools and prisons?** and **Question 2: What are the challenges for top-down and bottom-up restorative justice, and how can they work together?** Following is a summary of the discussions from each panel, with questions and responses from the floor.



## Day 3 schedule

Morning	Restorative Gloucestershire staff tour of Belfast
Afternoon	Restorative Gloucestershire staff visit to Northern Ireland Alternatives office
18.00-20.00	Public Event: Summary of the Knowledge exchange and Panel Discussion on key issues across the three days
20.00	Drinks reception and networking space

## Question 1: How can we realise the potential of restorative practice in our schools and prisons?

**Panel:** **Peter Brannigan** (Chief Inspector, Police Service Northern Ireland); **Louise Cooper** (Director of Rehabilitation Department of Justice, NI); **Martina Jordan** (Restorative Advocate with schools); **Jim McCarthy** (Deputy Director, Community Restorative Justice Ireland); **Paul Mukasa** (Coordinator, Restorative Gloucestershire); **Chair:** **Dr Brian Payne** (Ulster University).

**Introduction from Dr Brian Payne:** Each member of the panel will be given the space to consider how the potential of restorative practices in these two important areas can be realised followed by questions/debating with audience.

**Martina:** There is concern about young people disassociated from schools; restorative approaches embedded in schools can provide some solutions to this. Realising this can be very expensive, but it must happen as it will prevent children entering the criminal Justice system and coming into contact with the police.

**Jim:** Agrees with Martha. Restorative opportunities not only need to be embedded within infant schools, but also need to be embedded with the teachers in schools who are responsible for managing a lot of the dialogue.

**Paul:** It must involve teachers and young people, but also include parents. A school in Gloucestershire has become a restorative school and has the 'restorative motto' embedded across the school, with signs in classrooms and throughout the building. In that school, exclusions went from 30 students in a year to 1 student after the introduction of restorative practice. However, this is largely in primary schools in Gloucestershire, not in many secondary schools and there is concern we are 'setting students up to fail' when they move into senior school.

**Martina:** In Northern Ireland, there is more Restorative Practice in post-primary ages and not so much in primary. Some schools are not yet ready to implement this, and some have found it is better if parents are not involved in the process as they favour the more punitive approaches to punishment/management of behaviour.

**Paul:** In Gloucestershire, the benefits of adopting this approach are multiple as parents report that the young people are better behaved and community police officers also report better behaviour.

**Martina:** the potential is great, but there is need for more support, including financial support, for this to be adopted.

**Peter:** The circumstances as they stand now are problematic. It is wrong that we have police jeeps and cars parked in schoolyards and playgrounds to solve issues in those schools, this sits awkwardly as it shows a negative image of the police. The responses so far have hit the nail on the head: it must be a joined-up approach to deal with young people, families and the community. The only way that police should go into schools is wearing their uniform to show that police are people to trust to create a positive image. In Northern Ireland, the police could not have had the legitimacy they have if they didn't bring the community on board.

**Louise:** The approach needs to be well integrated into the school curriculum and into the school's everyday practice. In a school environment, how do we help the kids that are failing? How can this help more widely with positive behaviour? There is a clear link with young people's behaviour in later life.

**Paul:** In Gloucestershire, there is a history of effective work in prisons and with offenders as well as with the families of those in prisons to build and maintain positive relationships. People get so little support that this can help, particularly post-release. The family support model also shows wider benefits to ongoing positive behaviour.

**Point from floor:** *when used in schools in Gloucestershire, the children were going home and using the restorative approaches at home and it is repairing a lot of problematic behaviour. It also saves a lot of money.*

**Peter:** It's not really the money, it's the way that it stops negative interaction between the police and the community.

**Martina:** It also allows people to be held to account for their behaviour.

**Paul:** We wanted to train 10 officers in Gloucestershire (got 4) to go in uniform into schools to build positive relationships.

**Jim:** The local community officer was off for months but came back and a large number of referrals started to come in. It is about knowing the right people, going to the right police sergeants and constables as they know what's going on.

**Marina:** The benefits of Restorative Approaches in schools is happier schools. We also know that happier schools have better achievement, and happier staff means less stress for staff.

**Question from floor:** *School age children spend 50% of their time in schools. How creative could schools be if they didn't exclude children?*

**Louise:** Mentoring between older and younger students provides a positive way to support students. Buddy systems can also help. The school decides the policy, but it is essential that families are brought along with the process.

**Question from the floor:** *What do you think about the need for society to change from an adversarial system to offending to one of integration, because the power of stigma is punitive? Restorative justice needs to be ingrained into law for both the top and the bottom.*

**Louise:** There are problems with an adversarial system and what it does to people. For example – are prisoners offenders or are they people? The question is what does the state mean by justice? Are people treated well enough? What about the principle not to cause harm? It's very complex but it is very important to try and make change.

**Paul:** It is important to have organisations that work with people on release from prison. Part of the restorative process can be signposting people and providing support on release, but how do we make people aware of restorative justice?

**Nic:** One of the biggest obstacles for young people around youth justice is magistrates who don't believe in restorative Justice. One of the problems is that magistrates don't turn up to training (too busy etc) so they don't hear about it, from the bottom up, we should teach Restorative Justice as we teach first aid.

**Point from floor:** *Echoes what has been said, it is hard to win over the trust of the legal professionals and social workers. It is important to build up the trust with the key people. On prisons: the importance of restorative meetings with prisoners and families as they go in – as the family does the sentence too. It also important to have those meetings on release to help reintegration.*

**Point from floor:** *The boards that used to meet to tie this together don't meet anymore. It is important to get into Schools. Managing hostels, you can see the problematic exclusions with ex-offenders and the need to contact them with each other.*

**Point from floor:** *We don't have a restorative society, it is not embedded with us, if we can achieve this in schools it would help with this. However, not everyone wants Restorative Justice now. Maybe if we start early then we can build towards this in incremental bites – it takes time to transform the traditional criminal justice system.*

**Point from floor:** *It is important that it is an option not a replacement for the traditional system, its about awareness of different stages of the criminal justice system. Changing the story is important.*

**Paul:** Restorative practice is something that can be used to change our thinking.

**Brian:** Thanks for all these fantastic answers and comments. It is evident that we are already starting to see a road map taking place for the type of restorative future that we all want to see across our jurisdictions. The next question will I'm sure add even more detail on how that might look.

## Question 2: What are the challenges for top-down and bottom-up restorative justice, and how can they work together?

**Panel:** **Becky Beard** (Director, Restorative Gloucestershire) ; **Peter Brannigan** (Chief Inspector, Police Service Northern Ireland); **Louise Cooper** (Director of Rehabilitation Department of Justice, NI); **Jim McCarthy** (Deputy Director, Community Restorative Justice Ireland); **Nic Meeks** (Sargent, Gloucestershire Police seconded to Restorative Gloucestershire); **Paul Mukasa** (Coordinator, Restorative Gloucestershire); **Chair:** **Dr Brian Payne** (Ulster University).

**Introduction from Dr Brian Payne:** Next up each member of the panel will consider the direction (bottom-up/top-down/both) that restorative justice should be developed from, followed again by questions/debating with the audience.

**Becky:** Runs Restorative Gloucestershire, funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire on a four year cycle, which means that the organisation is more secure. They deliver 800 interventions. However, referrals come from statutory agencies not from the community – the culture in England with many communities is that they want it solved for them.

**Nic:** The difference in Northern Ireland is that it is led by the community

**Jim:** We don't differentiate between Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice because in the communities where we work, they don't see the difference. The hardest thing in developing Restorative Justice was trying to get the armed groups to give up violence. There were struggles with acceptance initially and it was hard to sell the model both to communities and to statutory agencies. When we were undergoing accreditation we were told that we had to undergo training, but when we got there we realised we knew just as much as the trainers and it became a shared experience. Now we are ready for a centre of excellence.

**Question from the floor:** Are there any difficulties with the community where trust isn't readily available?

**Peter:** A community-led approach is important as the police are not always good at this. This has to be up to a point, though, as there needs to be a meeting point. So how do we change police officers' ideas and behaviours? Initially, in 2007, there was no strategy to do RJ in police work, no real idea or strategy for this. This has improved, even if there is still a long way to go. The starting point is being able to talk to each other and connect with each other. Now, all the officers buy into RJ but don't lose sight that they are police officers.



**Peter (continued):** The top-down approach is about restoring the relationships between the police and the community: if the police can be a reflection of the community and consider the needs of the community then things will improve. As a police officer, it has been so rewarding to look back and to see how far we have come. Community support and relations have improved as a consequence.

**Louise:** It is not about top-down vs bottom-up, it must be both. The Department of Justice felt it was important that the community groups were around the table as equals. There will always be questions, but it must be a collective effort. It is incredibly important that we get the principles and processes for a Centre of Excellence right.

**Question from the floor:** The qualification is that we need to know what Restorative Justice is. Some of the agencies are not experts in this, but they can ask for help so that the practitioners gain recognition. So CRJ, Alternatives and Time Out commissioned a qualification that was accredited by the Restorative Justice Council. So there is a potential risk that with top down that there is a taking away of power and skills from the community. There is an issues sometimes with people coming over here to see how the bottom-up model can be transferred but it's hard to do this as it's a different model in a post-conflict area. Principles can be negotiated but it must be voluntary, it's not top-down vs bottom-up, it's both, therefore to be effective it needs to be integrated.

**Gloucestershire Hub model is explained:** It began from a small start in prisons, then an approach was made to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire for fixed 4yr funding. For Restorative Gloucestershire, the problem isn't engaging with statutory agencies as that is something that they are expected to do given the sources of funding. So it is easy to get these referrals. Visiting Northern Ireland, we have learned about engaging with communities and using people from those communities.

**From the floor:** A Centre of Excellence needs to be a Centre of Excellence of practitioners, not a cocooned place.

**Louise:** that is exactly what this aims to be.

**Becky:** the funding in Gloucestershire is associated with the OPCC, which gives stability – how is it funded in Northern Ireland?

**Jim:** sometimes I think that it would be easier to be funded from mainstream funders, but this does this mean that you become what the funding organisation wants. The Department of Justice are coming on board and the police have come on board, but do they only give you so much now because they want to hold you back? That is the difficult question that needs to be posed.



**From floor: (in the context of RJ in Nigeria):** Before the language of RJ was introduced in Nigeria we had the elders in the community – people the community respects and values. If the police are on board, what are the blocks to further progress? Is it the magistrates? How do we get past this and how do we get the community involved because if they are not involved it doesn't work?

**Becky:** The observer system is a good way to tackle this, getting all types of people in to see cases where real success has been realised and broaden awareness of the value of restorative practices.

**Brian:** That is time up once again so I am going to bring this fascinating discussion to a close. It is evident that there is a strong desire amongst all of our participants to drive forwards with the expansion of the use of restorative justice across their sectors, agencies and jurisdictions. Hopefully this event will be just a small stepping stone on that journey.



# Concluding remarks

## Summary

The Knowledge Exchange Project was an ambitious 3 day event that was set up to mark the visit to Belfast of a group of restorative practitioners and police officers from Restorative Gloucestershire in England. The aim was to bring restorative practitioners from both jurisdictions together to share best practice and explore how they might develop and grow their restorative services in the future.

Hosted at Ulster University's Belfast campus, the event quickly exceeded its original intentions bringing together over 40 practitioners and advocates from both sides of the Irish Sea to take part in a series of structured workshops, panel discussions and practitioner tutorials.

Community groups, police officers, statutory agencies, charities, victim groups and more shared their insights and experiences across a range of topics and forums for using restorative practices including young people and adults, police led and community led RJ, education, prisons and housing, serious offences, partnerships and multi-agency working.

## Key points that have emerged

A number of issues quickly emerged as dominant concerns. These included the use of restorative methods for young people, the potential scope or breadth of restorative justice as a viable intervention for serious criminality (for example, domestic and sexual violence), and broader discussions about what criteria must be in place before something can be labelled as restorative.

Finally, two overarching topics formed the centre piece of discussions, with a strong focus on policy development:

- **Gloucestershire and Northern Ireland: Applying top-down and bottom-up models of restorative Justice**
- **Towards a comprehensive Adult Restorative Justice Strategy and the prospects for a Centre of Excellence**

Each point is considered in turn on the following pages.

## *Gloucestershire and Northern Ireland: top-down and bottom-up models of Restorative Justice*

- An important dimension of the Knowledge exchange event was to bring together practitioners that provide Restorative Services in very different contexts. In Gloucestershire, the Police and Crime Commissioner provides long-term funding for a hub model, in which a central body - Restorative Gloucestershire - provides training, support and some level of infrastructure to statutory and voluntary and third sector organisations that have integrated restorative practices into their work. This successful model sees hundreds of interventions a year across the police, prisons, probation, housing, schools, and other areas. Although successful in working with statutory agencies, the restorative Gloucestershire model has had less success in engaging directly with community groups, the vast majority of referrals come from the statutory and partner agencies with which it works with correspondingly few from local communities.
- In Northern Ireland, the specific historical and political context has ensured that this jurisdiction has become one of the forerunners for the development and practice of restorative methods. This evolution is remarkable as it has evolved from both top-down and bottom up directions through the development of community-based restorative justice schemes that originated as a response to paramilitary punishment violence and now work closely with the PSNI and a range of other agencies, and the statutory Youth Justice System (specifically the Youth Conference Service) which was legislated for in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent Criminal Justice Review for the purpose of diverting at risk young people from the formal justice system. These two big actors have dominated discourses on the topic but a range of other agencies, schools, community groups and care homes also have a long history of conducting restorative based programmes.
- What was clear from the discussions of the three days was that practitioners felt that for a service to be successful it needed to have elements of both top-down, statutory support as well as bottom-up, community buy-in. Although both areas had elements of each approach, they were clearly developed in one of these traditions and were working hard to develop into the other. In Northern Ireland, the establishing of a Centre of Restorative Excellence represents significant buy-in from the department of Justice, although there is ongoing work around the shape of this body and the role that local providers will play. In Gloucestershire, developing community links outside of statutory agencies is hoped to increase the community awareness and buy-in to the services that are provided.

One of the key discussions over the three days was the development of a Centre of excellence in Northern Ireland. The Gloucestershire Hub model gave some indication of why this might work and the restorative agencies and practitioners considered different ways in which restorative practitioners could develop their services:

- People with an interest in restorative practices should be a mandate to reach out to other groups and agencies and construct partnerships.
- A process can be both: **bottom-up**, encouraging those with an interest in Restorative Practice to develop skills and show leadership; and **top-down**, where a head of an organisation or a government minister (in some cases) establishes standards and targets.

A Centre of Excellence would support this helping to:

- Build relationships based on shared values
- Promote a different way of working together
- Develop an initial relationship based on compatibility and what new partners can add to existing work.

Next Steps: On being invited to contribute to the ongoing agenda for a meeting between the DOJ and the NI Youth Forum on the way forward for a Centre of Excellence, we suggested the following questions to help structure the process:

## **1. Who should be involved in a Centre of Excellence and in what capacity/what role should they have**

- What community groups should be involved and what should they do (e.g. should they form a 'community advisory board' to the centre)?
- What agencies should be involved and in what capacity?
- What would a management structure look like (could the hub and spoke model of restorative Gloucestershire work here for example)?

## **2. Where should a Centre of Excellence be situated and what form should it take?**

- Does it need a physical base?
- Could it move around different communities/agencies?

## **3. What are the outputs/what do we want a Centre of Excellence to do?**

- What are the current gaps in need and how can it fill these?
- Should it be directly involved in case work or should it be a support/empowerment agency?
- If involved, what types of case work should it tackle or should it undertake?
- What other support can it offer (for example, training/space)?



# Restorative Practices Knowledge Exchange

*02–04 April, 2019*

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